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**Author:** Kazimiera Wódz

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Kazimiera Wódz

## Revitalization of the Silesian Identity — Chance and Threats

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### I

“The spectre wanders in Europe, the spectre of nationalism” — this is how slightly provocatively, considering the not scarred over in the social consciousness grudges the source of which were originating from the works of the classics attempts to put into practice the communist utopia, starts Czesław Miłosz’ essay *On Nationalism*, from the published in 1988, thus, still before the big with consequences events of 1989, book entitled *Beginning with My Streets*, reprinted in *Gazeta Wyborcza* of 2—3 Jan., 1993. This prophetic sketch contains many valuable for the sociologists thoughts devoted to the analysis of the phenomenon which after the tragedy of holocaust seemed to have been overcome for good and thrown out of the margin of the civilized world. And yet the ghosts have come back and we have to do today with the most barbarious signs of ethnonationalism in the shape of “ethnic purges” in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the eruption of mutual hatred between the neighbouring nations in many countries of the old Soviet empire with the intensification of the activities of the Neonazi movements in the countries of Western Europe, obsessed with hostility towards all the cultural, racial, linguistic dissimilarities.

The surprising and not understandable for many return of the tribal mentality carrying a large load of resentiments and xenophobia is particularly dangerous in the post-communist countries in which still fragile democratic

institutions are submitted to the pressures growing with market reform, tensions and social frustrations. Poland, although relatively ethnically homogeneous, is not free from these threats — since “Stranger” may, in case of need, become anybody who thinks and feels different, it is known not since today that the periods of violent social turning points favour the increase of ethnocentrism, irrational, magic thinking, referring to the most basic layers of human mentality.<sup>1</sup>

In the above-mentioned essay Czesław Miłosz warns us against the threats hidden in the close to the Polish tradition romantic nationalism, full of mysticism and almost religious exaltation. It does not mean, however, that the author sees in each form of nationalism threat for the democratic values and individual rights. Similarly to Ernest Gellner (1991) — Miłosz seems to believe that contemporary nationalism is the natural manifestation of the emancipation aims of these nations or ethnic groups which enter the road of modernization. Gellner believes that the requirements of modern individual production are the structural premises of the occurrence of nationalism as a specific conglomeration of politics (state) and culture (nation). “Nationalism — E. Gellner writes — is one of the theories of political legitimism which requires that ethnic borders do not cross with the political borders” (Gellner, 1991:9). From the original thoughts of the author referred to by Miłosz, it is worth mentioning those which remain in obvious contradiction with the stereotypes binding in the circles of the advocates and sympathizers of the national thought. Gellner claims that the national state is not in any case “the final destiny” of ethnic groups. Nations are not “‘natural beings’, given by God ways of classifying people. There are only cultures — sometimes subtly segregated overlapping, crossed, interlaced” (Gellner, 1991:64). Nationalism transforms the existing cultures into nation but sometimes annihilates them (!) (Gellner, 1991). The culture which nationalism is to defend which it is to revive, is often the invention of the very nationalism [or rather — nationalists, K. W.]. The theory of nationalism suffers from “false consciousness” — defining the folk culture and the traditional order of value, continuity, variety “[...] it produces [...] the new higher culture [...], it helps [...] in building the anonymous, mass society, it owes its success to the unprecedented turning point which took place in the history of our species [i.e. industrial revolution, K. W.] [...] it introduces unification” (Gellner, 1991:150—151). “[...] nationalism as an ideology produces, thus, its own contradiction, it is an intellectual illusion which is shared by the recently appointed from among the man of their plebeian compatriots intellectual or cultural élites. The appearance of this type of ideology is usually preceded by the experience of humiliation connected with the discrimination of the culture of one’s own ethnic group and eradication of one’s own culture (with the assumption, having all the features

of probability that social promotion is connected with the acceptance of language and culture of the dominant ethnic group)."

The feeling of humiliation and wrong (one of the most powerful sources of resentment) is sometimes the leaven of many revindication aims directed at raising from the "lowlands" the culture of one's own ethnic group and making a pattern out of it binding all inhabiting the given territory. It is this that, according to Gellner, national ideology is to serve and its aims are the same no matter whether we have to do with great nations or small ethnic-territorial communities who have no chance to become the independent politico-economic organisms (Gellner, 1991:63). One can doubt (the author himself does so) whether the presented by Ernest Gellner theoretical model is of the universal character, whether it allows to understand the source and form of such degenerated forms of nationalism as were carried by hitlerism or fascism. It is difficult to accept that the observed in Western Europe renaissance of national sentiments, taking sometimes the shape of the separatist movements (the Basques Country, Catalonia, Flanders, Scotland, Wales) have something to do with the ethnic conflicts of Armenians with Azers, Georgians with Abkhazs, Serbs with Croatians and Muslims and many other nationalistic groups involved in the dramatic events accompanying the collapse of the communist empire kept in the artificial uniformity.

Probably right is Ralf Dahrendorf who in *Considerations on the Revolution in Eastern Europe* 1990 notices that Eastern and Western Europe still play in different tunes — the second one enters the 21st century — for the first one the time goes in the opposite direction. Speaking directly the point is that occurring in the highly developed societies of the West ethnic-national revindications are the manifestation of the specifically romantic rebellion against the universalizing, unifying tendencies of the modern technicized and rationalized world (Kłoskowska, 1991:19). Nationalism in the post-communist countries is born, first of all, of hopelessness and backwardness, has a decisively destructive character, is manifested mainly in the growth of xenophobia excluding all the compromises in relationships between ethnic groups, often for generations inhabiting a common territory (Zaslavsky, 1992:107—108). Czesław Miłosz rightly underlines that in this part of the world ethnic conflicts almost always have religious component and separating strong national feelings from religious ones is in these cases almost impossible (Miłosz, 1988). Absolute loyalty towards one's own nation, Czesław Miłosz claims, has something of religious belief in it, it concerns for sure also Polish nationalism closely tied to Catholicism.

Is, thus, nationalism reviving on the ashes of the communist system a phenomenon basically negative and anachronic (Habsbawn, 1990)? Or, as Victor Zaslavsky thinks, referring to the above-mentioned work of E. Gellner, it is a necessary element of building new democracies, and the economic

restructuring of the Eastern European countries entering the difficult road of accelerated modernization. The latter realized under the motto of "return to Europe" would be real only in reference to these countries of Eastern Europe whose economy and system quickest adopt to the standards binding in the framework of the European Community (Asch, 1990, given after V. Zaslavsky, 1992:110).

Unfortunately, today it is still impossible to ascertain whether the phenomenon of ethnic mobilization observed in the majority of the former Eastern Bloc countries, being to a certain extent the understandable form of defense against the psychological effects of the shock which for the societies of these countries are deep economic-systematic change taking place for last years, is permanent or temporary. It is unknown either whether the growth of national (ethnic) feelings will have to be every time accompanied by the signs of hostility based on the ancient grudges and resentments. Whether in the face of the boundless tragedy which is taking place in Bosnia and Herzegovina in front of the eyes of the whole civilized world, one can still believe in nationalism as a constructive force enabling efficient carrying of market force and introducing the western type democracy in the post-communist countries? Or whether one can and should worry that ruthlessly enforcing their right to self-determination the nations (and ethnic groups) of Eastern Europe liberated from the political and military restraint of the recent superpower will substitute "slavery under the old government (communist) by local tyranny" (R. Dahrendorf, 1991:128)? The advocates of the open society, among them the above quoted Czesław Miłosz, Ralf Dahrendorf or Alain Finkielkraut and many others believe that these are not exaggerated worries. Aggressive nationalism and the attitude of hostility towards "the strangers" accompanying it is an infectious disease that all the nations which make the highest value of their own culture and from the right for self-determination (and for cultural identity) the cover for ruthless domination of the group rights over the individual's rights (Finkielkraut, 1992) are threatened with.

## II

In the published in 1990 work *The Faces of the Polish Character*, the editor of the volume, Antonina Kłosowska carried out a detailed analysis of the notions of "national culture" and "national identification" pointing, among others, to the dual, affirmative-negative character of the function which the culture itself and subjective feeling of affiliation to the specific nation or ethnic group may fulfil in relations with other nations or cultural

groups (Kłoskowska, 1990:12ff). How, thus, the author reminds, can the culture break the barriers of strangeness but also create them if the natural in the human world divisions into "native" and "foreign" are accompanied by the belief about both the superiority of one's own culture and contempt towards habits and values of others (Kłoskowska, 1990:24). The attitudes of this type are usually defined as ethnocentrism (Sumner, 1906), and their radical manifestations in the shape of xenophobia, i.e. generalized hatred towards different cultures or nationalities, are the most distinct expression of the negating functions of culture (Sumner, 1906:29).

Poland in its post-war borders has become the state almost unanimous nationally. The majority of Poles born after the war was brought up without contact with national minorities so numerous living in the 2nd Republic (1918—1939) — Ukrainians (15%), Byelorussians (5%), Jews (9%), Germans (2%) (Davies, 1986:120). According to some research workers, this fact could negatively influence the shaping in the Polish society of the socially accepted models of reaction towards the cultural dissimilarity (Łodziński, 1990:259).

Surely, there is a lot of right in this statement, however, the phenomena of extreme intolerance and xenophobia occur also in the multiethnic societies, such as the United States of America. Thus, the very experience of "multi-ethnicity" is not the satisfactory guarantee of peaceful coexistence and mutual acceptance. Tolerance towards dissimilarity, reactions towards what is strange, unknown, distant — is one of the fundamental problems of group life over which the generations of research workers incline unanimously, representing different areas of humanities — from ethnologist, historian, psychologist to sociologist (Nowicka, 1990).

The division of the social world into "native" and "strange" results, according to C. Lévi-Strauss, from the most elementary and universal human needs, this, however, what rules of separating one and the others will be binding in a given society and what will be the practical consequences of this division — depends on many factors, first of all, on the cultural openness or closeness of a given society. If we assume after E. Nowicka that the openness of a given society should be understood, first of all, as "[...] readiness to contact with people of a foreign group and accept the contents of foreign origin and, at the same time, treating strangers with a relatively small distance" (Nowicka, 1990:44), undoubtedly, the societies differentiated internally, allowing many alternative variants of cultural patterns (the notion of C. Kluckhohn, given after Nowicka, 1990) "[...] offering large margin of freedom in the ways of realizing cultural patterns as well as less punitive and less rigorous cultures in the matters of deviations from the binding norms have greater chances to be more open towards the strangers, both in the sense of readiness for contacts and emotional attitude" (Nowicka, 1990). Is, thus,

confirmed by the results of sociological survey growth of antipathy of Poles towards other nations and ethnic groups — Gypsies, Ukrainians, Germans, Arabs, Russians, Romanians, Negroes, Jews, Byelorussians (Jasińska-Kania, 1991:224—225) connected with the cultural closeness of the Polish society? Formulating the univocal answer to the above questions is extremely difficult, considering that the problems discussed here touch upon a very important subject for Poles — attitude towards one's own tradition, durability of national myths and connected with them stereotypes and prejudices towards old and new neighbours, etc. In the never ending discussions on the **national identity** of Poles take part the most prominent representatives of the Polish humanities — historians, sociologists, ethnologists (*Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, No. 1, 1992). Leaving to the intellectuals solving this extremely ticklish problem in which the national mythology mixes up with the sad, sometimes difficult to accept historical truth, let us look at what is said on this subject by the newest sociological surveys. We will refer here, first of all, to the extremely interesting work of the three Warsaw ethnologists: Ewa Nowicka, Sławomir Łodziński and Jan Nawrocki published in 1990 and containing the results of research carried out by the authors in 1988 within the framework of the topic: *National stereotypes in the Polish Society*, directed by A. Jasińska-Kania on the all-Polish sample of 1000 persons (given after Nowicka, 1990:52—53).

Summing up this part of research which referred to the “maps” of ranges of **homeliness** and **strangeness** in the consciousness of the Polish society, E. Nowicka claims that the present national consciousness of Poles is, to a large extent, of the **polonocentric** character [underlining mine, K. W.], is based on the strong psychologico-cultural relations with the clear addition of the predestined relations (biological continuation). The author arguing with the opinion of a prominent historian Tadeusz Łepkowski, expressed in the published in 1989 work entitled *Uparte trwanie polskości* [*Stubborn Duration of Polishness*] expressed worries that this polonocentrism, so highly evaluated by T. Łepkowski, may be the obstacle in the opening of Poles for the universal community. Nowicka's thoughts are developed in the further part of the work by the co-author of the discussed research, Sławomir Łodziński who made the subject of analysis Poles attitudes towards the strangers belonging to different races and cultures and temporarily residing in Poland (for more details, see Łodziński, 1990:211ff). It turns out that “despite the tradition of openness and multicultural character [the author does not specify closer what traditions he has in mind, footnote, K. W.], the Polish society has no favourable conditions for contact with other cultures and nations. Lack of social roles for “the strangers” and model of tolerance, weak sensitivity to their problems and lack of honest information as well as other socio-psychological consequences of the civilization collapse of Poland point out that it is the **inner situation** of our society [underlining mine, K. W.] that, to a larger extent than other factors,

defines the specific way of seeing and leads to taking specific attitudes towards other races and nations" (Łodziński, 1990:265—266). S. Łodziński critically commenting the results of his own research in the light of which Poles appear as an extremely tolerant nation and hospitable for the newcomers no matter the colour of their skin and cultural differences — shows, the second, less favourable for the picture of the fellow-citizens, side of the medal — opinions of the very interested, mainly the students coming from the third-world countries who have the reasons to feel bad in our country. Divergencies between the declared attachment to such values as tolerance and lack of prejudices and real, as a matter of fact, discriminating behaviour towards strangers is explained by the author by reference to the growing feeling of disappointment and frustration connected with the limitation of the possibilities of meeting needs and fulfilling important life aims and the sources of this state of affair are looked for by the author, among other, following S. Nowak and others (Nowak, 1988; Kiciński, Świda, 1987; Krzemiński, 1989) in the politico-economic phenomenon of the end of the 1980s. The observed in the Polish society of the 1980s growth of the level of aggression, apathy, discouragement, lowering the importance of moral norms in regulating everyday contacts between people, moving them from the sphere of commonplaceness to "the theatre of ceremonial values" (Krzemiński, 1989: 71—76) have their continuation in the changed politico-economic conditions. Disappointment which was brought to a large number of Poles by a 4-year "Solidarity" government, with "war on top",<sup>2</sup> growing unemployment and lack of real chances for quick improvement of the economic situation is a huge reservoir of negative emotions, which easily can find vent in the attacks on the newcomers from the East or from the South more and more often appearing in our streets. In the climate of social frustration and uncertainty, the popularity of the populist-nationalist political groups is usually growing up. They are morally responsible for stirring national sentiments above the safe level (see skin-heads' excesses). The acts of hostility are directed not only against "strangers-outsiders" residing in our country temporarily but also against those few,<sup>3</sup> residents often for many generations among Poles "strangers-inners" (Gypsies, Jews, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Germans) raising their understandable anxiety and mobilizing to fight against the aggressive majority. Small in numbers groups of national (ethnic) minorities have gained recently in Poland quite big possibilities of organizing themselves and political representation<sup>4</sup>, but their relationships with the "hosts" are far from ideal. However, the so-called average citizen of our country, especially when he lives in central Poland, has small chances to find out more about the problems of ethnic minorities living in Poland. It happens so that the important in number concentrations of national minorities in the peripheral areas of Poland creating the regions of cultural borderland (Polish—Lithuanian, Polish—



—Byelorussian, Polish—Ukrainian, Polish—Czech and Polish—German). Thus, the socio-cultural phenomena occurring in these regions now deserve special interest of the examiners of ethnic relations in Poland. Here we have to do with crossing of various traditions and cultural influences, conflicting of contradictory tendencies and identification options, taking often the shape of the so-called “borderland consciousness” (Śliwiński, 1991; Dawidiuk, 1991). Antonina Kłoskowska analysing the phenomenon of the borderland culture notices that it [i.e. borderland culture, K. W.] influences in the specific way the processes of national self-determination — it either sensitizes the feeling of national affiliation and strengthens the defensive attitudes (then we have to do with the phenomenon of defensive national identity), or — just the opposite, as a result of mixing up of cultural influences, it leads to a specific ambivalence (but also polivalence and bivalence) or even washing away of the feeling of national identity (Kłoskowska, 1992:137—141). Borderland consciousness is undoubtedly something else than national consciousness characteristic for the members of homogenous national group. Borderland consciousness — M. Śliwiński notices — develops not so much “[...] as the function of the real origin [ethnic, national, footnote K. W.] of the individuals but mainly as a result of conscious choice [underlining mine, K. W.] (Śliwiński, 1991:42). On the choice of such or other national option **attractiveness** decides in such cases (e.g. economic, cultural) of the national group changing in different historical epochs. As a result, national identification of the society often remains unspecified and unstable which, from the point of view of national majority, seems something ununderstandable and suspicious (Sakson, 1990, the same 1991:185—201). It is because of this reason that we can expect that together with the deepening of negative consequences of systemic transformation in Poland in the borderland regions, where the closest neighbour or friend may become “stranger” from day to day, xenophobic tendencies, degenerated forms of nationalism or chauvinism appear particularly strong. The lesson given to us by Sarajevo, the city in which for centuries Croats, Serbs, Jews, Muslims have lived next to each other proves that these are not pure speculations. Let us remember that xenophobia refers not only to big ethnic-national groups. In Western Europe we have numerous examples of degeneration to which leads chauvinist, blind, regional separatism (Basque ETA, IRA, Corsican terrorism). A. Finkielkraut quoted above notices in contemporary regional separatist movements the influence of the same political romanticism which is present in the majority of nationalist ideologies, romanticism which acting in defense of ethnic integrity (and cultural identity) prohibits the individual “[...] to go out of its identity [ethnic, completion mine, K. W.], absolutizes the differences [...] ruins all the community spirit of nature or culture between people” (A. Finkielkraut, 1992: 80). These important and also brave, because going as if upstream of ideas

developed in the circles of the most prominent French intellectuals (first of all, ethnologists gathered in College de France), reflections of the author of *The Defeat of Thinking*, make us seriously ponder on the uncritical sometimes enthusiasm of the groups expressing opinions for the aggressive forms of group identity claims which, as a matter of fact, assume the primacy of the rights of the community over the rights of the man.

It does not mean that all the manifestations of local patriotism and attachment to the native land could be considered as "failure of Mind towards tribal instinct". This kind of argumentation, attacked with particular passion by anti-(post?)-modernists seems a little naive, but, coming back to A. Finkelkraut's argument, fascination with cultural variety cannot mean absolutization of differences between ethnic groups and plunging man "with head" in his own culture, without the right of choice and critical evaluation (Finkelkraut, 1992:82—84). Surely, Alain Finkelkraut's opinions will not be favourably accepted in Poland and not only in the circles of "nationalists", but also among this part of intellectuals who fascinated with ethnological concepts of culture absolutize the right of ethnic groups to cultivate their own cultural identity even at the price of limiting the rights of some of their more individualistic or even rejecting (why not?) their own cultural heritage members. Culture, in the understanding of the defenders of the rights of ethnic groups to their own identity, often becomes the synonym of **sacrum**, it does not undergo any valuation which, according to Finkelkraut, leads to dangerous in consequences absurd — here in the changed shape returns the spirit of nativism which substitutes the notion of "race" with the notion of "culture", carrying out new division of the humanity into "invincible and non-reducible collective beings" (Finkelkraut, 1992:86). The words "culture", "cultural identity" become against the intentions of ethnologists themselves the tool of political fight, the motto overused by those against whom was once directed the intellectual movement of fight against colonialism and racism. It is worth remembering about warnings, maybe slightly too dramatized by A. Finkelkraut when in Upper Silesia opinions can be heard calling for revitalization of the Silesian identity. Upper Silesia is one of these regions of Poland in which the programmes of regionalization are articulated most strongly, in opposition, however, to the Wielkopolska or Kashubian regionalism — here we have to do with clear separatist component. Understanding the reasons of this state of affair, without referring to some elements of the history of this part of Poland, is practically impossible.<sup>5</sup>

### III

Surprising ease with which (unfortunately!) some modern sociologists build generalizations concerning the genesis of regionalism in Upper Silesia results probably from the relatively weak knowledge of the complicated history of this area. This bitter and, there is nothing to hide, directed to a large extent towards myself remark, has occurred to me during a thorough reading of probably underestimated by the sociologists (I do not know if by the historians too) work of Eugeniusz Kopeć *We and They in Upper Silesia* published in 1986. In the preface to this book Józef Chlebowczyk, an eminent specialist in Silesian problems, stresses with approbation that Eugeniusz Kopeć goes decisively beyond the descriptive-factographic, narrative-event approach to the reality towards sociological interpretation. As a matter of fact E. Kopeć's discussed work, apart from his master's, J. Chlebowczyk's works and the classical studies of Stanisław Ossowski devoted to the Opole region belong to the most important works in the sociology of ethnic relationships in Upper Silesia. Before, however, we give the floor to the author of this small in volume, but containing much precious information study, let's remind the basic facts.

There is no doubt as to the border-line character of the Upper Silesian culture, formulated for the centuries of the Prussian-German (and earlier Czech-Moravian and Austrian) presence on the ethnically Polish land (Chąłasiński, 1935; Fr. Szafranek, 1934; Ossowski, 1965; Gładysz, 1972; Chlebowczyk, 1975; Stańczak, 1978 et al.). In the Silesian melting pot for centuries have mixed up Polish, Czech-Moravian and German influences and the power of their influence was always connected with the affiliation of the land to wider politico-state structures (wider, see Wereszycki, 1987; Davies, 1981, 1986). The historians of Silesia unanimously claim that the 19th century was of crucial importance for forming the cultural face of Upper Silesia (Chlebowczyk, 1986; Wereszycki, 1987). The sudden acceleration of industrialization processes (particularly from the middle of the last century) and the changes of the local job market connected with it favoured the influx of people from Germany to Upper Silesia, first of all, of medium and higher office personnel, administrators, engineers, technical supervisors, learned professions. These people made the dynamically developing middle class, whereas the local people reinforced mainly the working class (Długoborski, 1986, given after Rykiel, 1991:73). It was then that for the first time to such an extent the Silesian linguistic-ethnic group of an essentially plebeian character was confronted with the middle-class culture of the German colonizers. This specific entanglement of the ethnic-linguistic divisions (as well as religious ones, although in this case it is difficult to separate the established in the

tradition stereotypes from historical truth, wider on this subject, see Robotycki, 1990:25) with socio-economic (German character = higher social and material status, Polish character = lower status, plebeian character) for many has defined the specificity of the nationalistic processes in Upper Silesia. Apart from the unavoidable in the conditions of the government of the Prussian-German politico-administrative, economic, educational (since 1872 — obligatory German education) structures and *Kulturkampf* realized according to a planned cultural expansion of the assimilation processes of these groups of the autochthonous population who joined the general trend of civilization-cultural changes even at the price of eradication in one's own ethno-linguistic group — we have here to do with the described in detail in the scientific literature phenomena of strengthening the feeling of linguistic-ethnic separateness of the native population closing this community within one's own culture language habit, religion (Chlebowczyk, 1975). Connected with this was the far reaching sacralization of "homeliness" and deep dislike of the supralocal territorial-state structures. It is in these conditions (obviously presented here in a simplified way) that the particular, Upper Silesian variant of the Polish folk culture cristalized in the last century being for many tens of years (not without the support on the side of the Polish cultural-educational and religious organizations) the efficient barrier against the total germanization of the native population (Pośpiech, 1982, given after Robotycki, 1990:26).

Born during *Kulturkampf* specific union between the fight for preserving the Polish character and Catholic confession has led to "[...] the stereotype connecting Catholicism with the Polish character" (Lesiuk, 1990:9). The feeling of ethnic separateness of Upper Silesians in accordance with the right of background described by S. Ossowski, created in the conditions of the Prussian-German statehood the favourable conditions for the activities of the Catholic priests education, cultural, political activists directed pro-Polish. The culminating point of their activities falls for the period of plebiscites and Silesian Uprisings (Davis 1986:116) as a result of which a small part of Upper Silesia (together with Cieszyn Silesia) has found itself within the borders of the reborn Polish state (Wereszycki, 1987; Wrzesiński, 1988; Kutrzeba, 1988), of course, as Cz. Robotycki rightously stresses — the First World War and the defeat of Germany have not univocally forejudged the problem of Silesia (Robotycki, 1990:27). Not going into the complicated conditions preceding the final decisions of the League of Nations and not stepping in the reserved for the historians evaluations of the political situation in which Poland has found itself after signing the peace treaty with Germany — one can probably accept, expressed by Cz. Robotycki opinion, that in the political conditions created then in Upper Silesia the occurrence of the sovereign states could not supress the mixed ethnic composition in both divided parts of this area (Robotycki, 1990:29). "None of the sides — Cz. Robotycki writes — resigned from

the measures which in the future would lead to the change of situation. [...] The Polish programme anticipated the activities in three main directions: supporting the beliefs of the Silesian population that the border solutions are temporary and they will change for the benefit of Poland, strengthening the Polish national awareness among people remaining on the other side of the border, supporting these manifestations of economy, demography and culture which connected Silesia with the remaining parts of Poland" (Robotycki, 1990:29, wider see Wrzesiński, 1988). However, already in the inter-war period, in the area of Upper Silesia included to the Polish state there appeared specific confrontation of the regional Silesian culture with the introduced here especially by the numerously arriving Galician intellectuals "romantic-nobleman's Polish national culture" (Kopeć, 1986:37). Of course, cultural differences were not the only source of misunderstandings and conflicts between the newcomers and the autochthons (wider see Rykiel, 1985, 1988, 1991).

But specific sensitivity of the Silesians to "[...] the lordly style of life" of the Polish office clerks had its source in the earlier described specificity of the Silesian national feeling built on the one hand on the opposition towards the German character and on the other — on the deep feeling of harm and wrong, originating in the times of *Kulturkampf*. The Silesian dreams about Poland were strongly connected with the myth of social equality — "The Silesian people — E. Kopeć writes — fought for the Polish state affiliation since it connected with it the hopes of social liberation" (Kopeć, 1986:29). The myth of **just Poland** in which so far subjugated and devoid the right for one's own culture and language Silesian people are in gremio promoted to the **posts and high offices** reserved once for the German and those of the Upper Silesians who at the price of promotion renounced connections with **homely surroundings** undergoing "germanization" has soon turned out to be phantasy. Silesians, according to E. Kopeć, were the only regional group who proclaiming themselves in favour of Poland has put forward specific conditions to the future state authorities: ensuing the existence at the level at least the same as during the Prussian and Austrian times [in reference to Cieszyn Silesia, footnote K. W.], abolishing unfavourable [for the Silesians, footnote K. W.] social and property classes, opening the unlimited possibilities of social promotion (Kopeć, 1986:46). For the reasons, the detailed presentation of which would go beyond the framework of his study — these great expectations have not been fulfilled. The promises given to the Silesians by the Polish plebiscite propaganda has turned out unrealistic, the expected promotion — in many cases more difficult than it was expected — it was obstructed by the lack of appropriate education of the candidates for the government posts (although in the Act on the Organic Statute of the Silesian Province of 15th July, 1920 special references have been anticipated for the autochthons)

and slower than it was anticipated speed of acquiring by the local people the literary form of Polish (Kopeć, 1986:56). The situation of the Silesian province was worsened by the international obligation of the Republic resulting from the Geneva Convention signed on 15th May, 1922, guaranteeing de facto preserving the German state of possession in many spheres of economy and, what follows — freedom of running the personal policy in one's own companies. Let's add that still fragile institutions of the Polish state soon faced serious social tensions connected with the economic recession of 1925—1926. The symbol of the growing difficulties of integration of the Silesian province with mother country has become the problem of the dictator of the 3rd Silesian Uprising, W. Korfanty, who lost the battle for power with the representing the camp of the *Sanacja* (Davis, 1986:123) regime system Silesian voivode, Michał Grażyński. In the persons of these two politicians, E. Kopeć reminds, have clashed not only two different politico-philosophical options but also totally different visions of the integration of Silesian borderland with the state organism of the Republic (ibid., p. 35). The basic source of tensions and conflicts at different levels of social hierarchy between the autochthonous population and the newcomers was the essential **non-congruence of social structures cultural patterns, customs, mentality and language of both these societies** (Kopeć, 1986:80). In the situation of the growing economic crisis, unemployment and social unrests connected with it — the immigrants coming from other parts of Poland caused aversion and strengthened the Upper Silesia in the belief that they are the subject of discriminating activities on the side of the Polish authorities. Mutual animosities and distrust deepened cultural distances and dissimilarities of ethos — local, conservative-egalitarian with strong influences of German culture and vague nationalistic identification (J. Misztal, 1984) and the progressive, secularized, attached to the national ideas ethos of foreign intellectuals. The conflicts and tensions referred also to the workers' communities — and here, the civilization — cultural differences were observed deepened by the regulating towards the newcomers from **behind the bounds** employment policy. The latter element, independently of the reason which made the Polish authorities introduce them, has added, according to E. Kopeć, to the increase of provincial xenophobia existing in the Silesian province. The feeling of Silesian separateness has become in the period of great economic crisis the factor differentiating the Silesian borderland from the rest of the Polish state. What is more — stressing this separateness, not questioned by anybody, was instrumentally used by the separatist group, such as The Union for the Defence of the Silesians or, founded in 1926, the The Union of Native Silesians (Kopeć, 1986:53). The Silesian regional tie covering both Poles and Germans living for generation next to each other, often friendly and connected by kinship ties has become the subject of numerous manipulations not only on the side of the openly separatist groups but also Christian

Democracy oppositional towards the government camp (after 1926). Grażyński himself trying to neutralize the influences of W. Korfanty and his advocates has undertaken, at least partially successful, attempt of adding value to the Silesian culture by actively joining the occurring then in Poland regionalist movement which was patronized, among others, by Władysław Orkan and Stefan Żeromski (Kwiatkowski, 1984). Rehabilitation of the Upper Silesian homely surroundings, ennoblement of the Upper Silesian dialect, stressing its connection with the historical Polish language, interest in the Silesian folk culture as a source of spiritual richness of the Silesians which "saved the Polish people in Silesia for Poland" (Kopeć, 1986:187) — all these activities of the contemporary administrative authorities of the Silesian province objectively aimed at the appeasement of the growing provincial xenophobia (scrupulously fanned by the German propaganda) was brutally broken by the Second World War.

The Hitler's occupation, including all Upper Silesia together with the part of Kielce Province (the districts of Sosnowiec and Będzin) and the Cieszyn Silesia into the Reich, have brought complete break of open ties with Polish tradition. Persecutions of Polish, carried out with the German consequence as well as carried out on an unparalleled in other regions scale of action of enrolment on the so-called *Volksliste*<sup>6</sup>, favoured it (Broda-Krężl, 1978). The *Volksliste* action covered the whole Silesian population, however, in the old Silesian Province over half of the population (64.1%) was included into III nationalistic group which, according to the German settlements, meant lack of crystalized national awareness (Błaszczak-Wacławik, 1990:48). For anybody who at least slightly understands the complexity of the ethno-nationalistic identification of the Silesians, it is not a secret that the formal access to German nationality, in the form of enrolment on the *Volksliste*, was in Upper Silesia of decisively smaller importance than in General Government (Davis, 1986:69), and did not in fact mean regermanization (which, as a matter of fact, was the reason of dissatisfaction of the officers of Hitler's administration responsible for the German nationalistic policy, (wider on this subject, see Adamski, 1948, given after Błaszczak-Wacławik, 1990:50). However, in the opinions and feelings of many Poles going through the gehenna of occupation without these substitutes of "normality" which were given to the inhabitants of Upper Silesia, the attitudes and nationalistic declarations of the Silesians were the evidence of opportunism and even national treason (Błaszczak-Wacławik, 1990:57—58). This far too simplified an unjust stereotype of "the Silesian-renegade" has strengthened, first of all, in the consciousness of people inhabiting the areas of Zagłębie Dąbrowskie neighbouring with the former Silesian Province — it is not by accident that the management personnel of the Zagłębie industrial works and the officials of Hitler's administration were recruited in this part of the Katowice Notary mainly from aboriginal

Silesians. These and other "actions" of the invader consequently aimed at breaking up the ties of Upper Silesia with the remaining Polish land and sharpening the nationalistic antagonisms in the very Upper Silesian community.

After painful occupational experience the tragical mistake of the Polish authorities turned out to be the policy nationalistic verification carried out in a shameful way, without even minimum orientation in the specificity of the ethnic situation of Upper Silesia. Soon after the war, especially in the years 1945—1946, there were mass arrests and deportations of people admitting ties with German nationality, thousands of Silesians (including former Silesian insurgents!) got to the camps of forced labour in the Soviet Union, less than half of them came back home at the end of the 1940s (and even later, see Szymański given after Siwiec, 1992) ruined physically and mentally. Those who of their own will or under pressure decided to solicit rehabilitation and restoration of civil rights (it concerned, first of all, people with the II *Volksliste* category), were suffering humiliation, fear and torment (Łempiński, 1979). There were cases of the acts of revenge and cruelty which were committed by the recent victims of Nazi terror (Berlińska, 1993) as well as ordinary corrupt practices and offences on the side of the Soviet military authorities, Security Office or Police (Błasiak, 1990:74). Not uncommon were the cases of displacement of autochthons whose property was taken over by the corrupted representatives of the civil service, being recruited, dominantly, from the newcomers (Misztal, 1984, after Rykiel, 1991:77). There are many proofs that the deep grudges and feeling of harm which occurred then have marked with the seal of distrust and aversion the relationship between native people and "the newcomers" (Błasiak, 1990).

The bitter paradox of history can be called the fact that the way of solving the *Volksliste* problem accepted by the Polish authorities meant, as a matter of fact, recognizing the German legal state and laying almost all the population of the former Silesian Province a "potential charge of national treason and collaboration with Hitler's invader" (Błasiak, 1990:70, wider see Łempiński, 1979:103).

The tragedy of the situation was completed by the fact of mass participation of the Silesians in the German military formation (Wehrmacht). Many of them did not come to Silesia after the war where their wives and children still remained. It was, as it is known, one of the important reasons of emigration of the native population to Germany in the years 1947—1949 and — in the framework of the so-called action of uniting families soon after the October 1956 (Davis, 1986:6—10 and Łempiński, 1979:246). Let's add also the Silesians, former solidiers of the Polish Military Forces in the West, mainly prisoners of war and Wehrmacht deserters, did not come back home (wider see Małkiewicz, 1982, unpublished Ph.D., given after Błasiak, 1990).



In the context of the post-war dramas of verification of nationalistic Upper Silesian community, the appearance in this area of huge masses of newcomers displaced according to the Soviet concept of solving the problem of the Polish borders accepted in Yalta by Western Allies (Kersten, 1985) from the former Eastern borderland of 2nd Republic had to cause the strong feeling of threat among native population. It was strengthened by the commonly prevailing slackness and chaos which the Polish administration taking over authority from the hands of the Soviet military commanders was not able to control (wider see Łempiński, 1979; Misztal 1984; Kersten, 1985). In the territory of the former Silesian Province, which particularly interests us here, the main waves of the immigrants came from the neighbouring Zagłębie Dąbrowskie<sup>7</sup> and adjoining it south-eastern provinces (Cracow, Kielce as well as Rzeszów) (given after Błasiak, 1990:80). The closest neighbours, mainly the inhabitants of Zagłębie, came as the first ones, together with the Soviet Army in the morally doubtful (although maybe psychologically understandable) role of "the judges of the Polish character of Silesia" (Gołba, 1945, here after Błasiak, 1990). From there, "from behind the border", have been recruited to a large extent the officers of "the new order", communist administration, security forces, police (wider, see the above quoted study of Błasiak, 1990). In the situation of the specific branding the Silesians with the "national-civil inferiorists" (Błasiak, 1990) which many of them experienced as personal tragedy the foreign origin of the new political "élites" was of crucial importance for shaping the negative stereotype of "the inhabitants of Zagłębie" — *gorols* accused of all the wrong and misfortunes experienced by the native population after the war. On the side of the immigrants, the answer was the simplified and equally negative stereotype of *hanys*, **the man with the unshaped national affiliation whom you cannot trust**. The specific intensification of the anti-Silesian phobias falls in the period of Stalin's terror when the meritorious for the matter of the Polish character of Silesia nationalistic activists, such as Arka Bożek, have been debarred from posts of authority (Śmiałek-Wróblewska, Sputeł, 1988, given after Błasiak, 1990:94). Independently of the real reasons by which the contemporary political authorities were prompted carrying out this kind of purges of the administrative apparatus (first of all), the belief has fixed in the common consciousness of the Silesian that only ethnico-nationalistic motives were hiding behind it (Błasiak: 1990:95). This tendency to see all the problems of Upper Silesia in the ethnic categories with strongly marked feeling of wrong towards the "non-one's countrymen" political élites has been preserved through all the post-war period, first of all, among the few representatives of the native middle classes — it was they who suffered the greatest humiliation and frustration resulting from blocking or limiting the access to the posts in state administration, education or culture, occupied

by the "newcomers" obedient to the orders from "the Head Office" (Wódz [J.] (ed.), 1990).

The mass influx of the culturally heterogeneous population to Upper Silesia has led to the typical in this situation clash of cultures, stressing and sensitizing of the objectively existing cultural differences between the native population and the newcomers — starting from the problems of the language (Upper Silesian dialect), through the patterns of the family-neighbourhood co-existence, the attitude towards work (considered as the most characteristic discriminant of the Silesian workers' ethos) and ending with the patterns of religious life (wider see Wódz [K], 1992). The feeling of wrong, inferiority and humiliation felt by the native population in contacts with the representatives of the foreign intellectuals, engineering technical personnel, representatives of higher levels of party-state administration, in the case of mass recruitment to work in industry of unqualified workers gave way to contempt and belief of one's "civilization" superiority. In contact with the unprepared for hard work in mines and iron works and urban life conditions country population from the region of Rzeszów, Kielce or the Cracow Province — the local workers' communities for generations connected with the industrial tradition gained confirmation of the negative opinions about the *werbus*, *gorols*, trying to pick a quarrel, *szumowniki* unstabilized in terms of life conditions (W. Mrozek, 1964). However, theses *gorols* attracted to Silesia by promises of high income and "social promotion", have either quickly run away from here not standing the trial of hard physical work in the mines or iron works, or have struck roots making use of the preferential allowance of flats in the gigantic dormitories shooting up like mushrooms on the outskirts of the Silesian towns. The post-war housing policy ruthlessly subordinated to the needs of the industrial production has to a large extent added to fixing the earlier existing socio-ecological structures of the towns of Upper Silesia and deepening the socio-spatial distances between the native population concentrated, first of all, in the old housing estates and the immigrants settled only in the new buildings (Frąckiewicz, 1983). The fate of the old workers' districts of the industrial part of Upper Silesia are the most striking expression of the marginalizations of considerable groups of regional community of Upper Silesia in the period of real socialism — as opposed, however, to the quite commonly proclaimed stereotype — the Silesian blue-collar has not become a Croesus in the Polish People's Republic and the presented, especially in the times of Gierek's success propaganda, optimistic pictures of smiling, extracting in the sweat of their brows and supporting the "right forces" miners, have turned out equally false as the enthusiasm manifested by the prominent winners of the state awards "for merits for the development of the socialist motherland". Hoping that the nearest years will allow to correct the deformed for years of impudent propaganda picture of Upper Silesia, I will only make a statement which,

as one can expect, many will accept with disbelief — for almost the whole period of real socialism it would be difficult to point to the second region in Poland in which the symbolic contents passed in the official circulation (mass media, through educational, cultural institutions, etc.) would swerve so much from the symbols and values functioning within the framework of the first system of culture (i.e. in the framework of primary group or local community, distinction introduced by Kłoskowska, 1981). Again and again these divergences were observed, for example, during conflicts caused by ostentation ignorance of Silesian towards formal education the lack of which the Silesians themselves have often successfully compensated with higher culture of work and many years' professional experience. The Silesian workers' community as a whole to a small extent has used the undoubtful (at least formally) possibilities of social promotion through education. The sociological research of the 1970s and 1980s show that although since the end of the 1950s in the Silesian workers' families disappears the tradition of inheriting by the sons father's profession, still we have to do here with the reproduction of the social status of parents, first of all, in connection with limiting the educational aspirations of Silesian youth (Mrozek, 1987). Let's say it openly — such a state of affairs has for many decades been consciously supported by the regional party-economic bureaucracy — realizing "economic tasks" coming from "the head office". Following the mad assumptions of "the socialist planned economy", the heavy industry of Upper Silesia was to fulfil "the landable" role of "the raw material-energetic source" — it meant in practice limiting the developmental possibilities of the regional economy, strengthening its mono-cultural character together with all the negative consequences of this state of affairs from economic, through socio-cultural, ending in ecological (Kramer (ed.), 1988). The authoritatively imposed model of extensive industrialization forced the specific structure of the regional job market, first of all, unqualified labour force was needed — it was not by accident, then, that in the structure of secondary education of the Upper Silesian Industrial Basin vocational schools have dominated until, attached to the most important branches.

As a matter of fact, thus, the regional system of education favoured the continuation of the traditional models of educating Silesian children and youth, with time it started to play the role of one of the main limiters of the educational promotion of this community (Błasiak, 1980:118). Of course, the objective educational limitations were not the only reasons of socio-cultural marginalization of large groups of native population of the former Silesian Province. We have mentioned above the specific for the industrial part of Upper Silesia ecologico-social processes thanks to which the old dating, to the end of the last century workers' districts have become specific enclave of the native community which up till now have preserved many features of local communities (Wódz [K.], 1992).

By the right of paradox, it was in old workers' districts of the towns of the Upper Silesian Industrial Region that the conditions favouring the preservation and cultivating of local traditions, dialect, treated as the basic marker of belonging to the group of **countrymen**, allowing to separate oneself from the non-Silesian surrounding, have emerged. The supporting of separateness of the native population towards the newcomers was also favoured by the branched network of informal family-neighbourhood ties which could not be ruined by the rides of departures for Germany in the 1950s and the 1970s. The processes of erosion and sinking of Upper Silesians into the culturally heterogeneous community of immigrants was prevented by the presented up till today endogamy — there were cases of the non-Silesians marrying into the resident for generations Silesians families, the opposite examples were rare (Rykiel, 1989). The closed circle of social relationships low socio-spatial mobility (departures for Germany never meant breaking ties with one's countrymen) created particularly favourable conditions of the reproduction of local culture, the carrier and at the same time, the basic element of which, was and is the Silesian dialect. In the individual scope socialization in the traditional Silesian family, in the culturally homogeneous local community, mean acquiring together with the dialect, the specific level of linguistic-cultural competence, and, thus, forming specific for these communities primary habitus which often turned out to be disfunctional towards the requirements of the educational system (Błasiak, 1990:144ff; Łęcki et al., 1992). Referring, thus, on the one hand to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of **habitus** and, on the other, to Basil Bernstein's theory of linguistic codes, we can look at educational failures of children from the traditional Silesian environments from the point of view of their linguistic-cultural equipment which very often had become **cultural inadequacy** painfully felt in the contact with school (Łęcki et al., 1992:27). One cannot exclude that the lowering of the level of educational aspirations, so common among Silesian youth, was a specific form of defense against difficulties in learning easy to foresee (Błasiak, 1990:114ff). It referred, first of all, to the arts subjects the learning of which required acquiring the literary form of Polish and together with it — essentially foreign distant from the historical experience of one's own ethnic group cultural tradition (Łęcki et al., 1992:27). The secondary school — unfortunately! — has often been this place where the children from Silesian families have experienced the effects of negative stigmatization of their native dialect, for many this experience has turned so painful that it decided on the attitude towards school, teachers and to these of colleagues who had no such problems (Bieniasz, 1991:30).

It is in this way that there appeared specific feedback between the outer and inner limiters of the educational promotion of Silesian children and youth

leading finally to fixing the marginal position of the wide parts of native population.

This situation, let's repeat, was during the whole post-war period very convenient for the regional and central party-state administration since it allowed to realize without any obstacles gigantic industrial investments, absorbing the innumerable amount of unqualified labour force. The latter was recruited from both the local population and the foreign element, however, till the end of the 1980s there existed additional barrier of social promotion towards the Silesians in the form of the unwritten rule of moderate trust applied the more willingly the wider the Silesians used specific legal regulations facilitating them settling in Germany. It is not necessary to add that these privileges are very often the subject of envy and desire on the side of the newcomers born in other parts of Poland, they confirmed their belief about the double-dealing and opportunism of Silesians who were ready to renounce the Polishness for the right of using the German prosperity (Marek, 1991).

Passing such evaluations, the newcomers from the up-country did not trouble to understand the complicated motives of the emigration decisions of the Silesians, dictated often by the feeling of bitterness and grudge towards those who came here after the war in search of their place on earth and made it unbearable for the natives.

Summing up the present consideration, we can ascertain that the post-war fate of the Upper Silesian community not only did not facilitate the integration of the newcomers with the native population but strengthened the isolationist tendencies lying in them, they strengthened many negative stereotypes, both among the foreign population (Silesian = German) and among the Upper Silesian threatened in their rights "to be themselves at themselves" who explained all their *miseries* by the presence of immigrants.

In recent years in Upper Silesia appear regional movements which build their political programme on the feeling of wrong and underprivilege in reference to the newcomers.

The few so far examiners who have attempted at explaining the essence of this new Upper Silesia regionalism (Berlińska, 1990; Błasiak, 1990; Gerlich, 1992; Szczepański, 1993) concentrate on the current political, economic, cultural conditionings of this phenomenon, without noticing the surprising convergence of argumentation of contemporary Upper Silesia regionalists with the concepts and proposals of their predecessors, once concentrated round Wojciech Korfanty.

The leading idea of the most influential regional associations openly referring to the political heritage of the prominent Silesian patriot is the integration of regional community round the traditional Silesian values, such as family, work and religion (Klasik, 1988) and the final political aim — restoration in Upper Silesia of the systemic solutions from the inter-war

period with advanced regional autonomy (Kositza, 1991). The above-mentioned traditional values, against the opinions of some Upper Silesian regionalists are not "the signs of the identity of this region" (Klasik, 1988). The so-called "regional values", as Czesław Robotycki has rightly recently observed, are, as a matter of fact, the mythologized picture of one's own regional group, idealized and strongly emotionally tinged (Robotycki, 1990:32, cf. also Gerlich, 1992). The attempts at mythologizing one's own past are often accompanied by specific nostalgia for "the lost paradise" whose artistic expression can be found in the Silesian films of Kazimierz Kutz, in Janosch's novels, in Horst Bienek's creative output (Robotycki, 1990:33). However, the idyllic, devoid of arrises, picture of the Silesian past, opposed to the desintegration and chaos introduced here by the "newcomers" occurs not only in literary or artistic expressions, it is also reflected in the academic expressions marked by evaluation, whose authors uncritically repeat simplified, black-and-white mental schemes, glorifying one's own regional group and opposing it to the "newcomers", embodying the whole evil of this world (see especially Bukowska-Floreńska, 1987, wider see Gerlich, 1992). Of course, these types of attitudes are nothing exceptional in the history of human communities, evaluating the past and its mythologization gain in power in the decisive periods and are, to a certain extent, natural reaction to disappointments and frustrations the sources of which are in the present. However, in the case of Upper Silesia, with its complicated history and cultural mixing, mythologization of the past means not only its idealization but also — unfortunately — its ideologization, which, similarly to Cz. Robotycki, I understand, first of all, as an attempt at giving the universal status to one of many possible versions of the past (tradition, culture) of this region (Robotycki, 1990:31). In opposition to Cz. Robotycki, I do not think that similar phenomena could be discussed only in reference to the obsessive attempts at proving the Polish character of Silesia, changed into the impudent changing of history, barbarious destruction of architectural monuments, questioning the contribution of the German creators into the culture of Silesia, etc. (ibid.). The expression of specific ideologization of the past are the postulates of **revitalization of Silesian** culture raised by some regional movement, based on completely wrong and having no justification in ethnosociological data assumption that Silesian culture is still, despite the passing of time and irreversible to a large extent demographic-social processes, indivisible, compact whole, in many respects exceptional and attractive for all the inhabitants of Upper Silesia, no matter who they are and where they come from (*Declaration of the Upper Silesian Union*, 1990, wider see Gerlich, 1992). Stressing the cultural separateness of Upper Silesia, magnifying the objectively existing cultural differences between the native population and the newcomers, at the same time promoting the primacy of "the Silesian character" over the culture

of the newcomers, as well as the national culture (wider see Gerlich, 1992), brings the contemporary Upper Silesian regionalism closer to ethnonationalism occurring in many peripheral regions (Gourevitch, 1979). Referring to local traditions, exposing specific features of the Silesian regional ties (Ossowski, 1967), supporting and even strengthening isolation tendencies basing on strong community ties (Gerlich, 1992:29) more and more often serve the campaign run by the regional groups for regionalization — from the concept of great Silesia presented by the activists of the Upper Silesian Union till the projects of restoring the legal state of the Silesian Province from the inter-war period popularized by the Movement of Silesian Autonomy (Kositzka, 1993).<sup>8</sup> The latter seem particularly dangerous, taking into account the dissimilarity of geopolitical conditioning, nationalistic relationships, economic situation of Upper Silesia from the inter-war period in comparison with contemporary times. Upper Silesia is not the Western border of the Republic today, the native population — apart from the country areas — does not exceed even half of its present inhabitants. Affected by the heaviest consequences of the errors of “socialistic industrialization”, the industrial part of Upper Silesia is facing the dramatic civilization challenges which it can cope only with the solidary support of the whole country. Arduousness of everyday life, tiredness and fear of more and more real unemployment, loss of the social prestige by these professional groups which not long ago were on top of the hierarchy of income, are the explosive potential which is revealed in the following strike waves.

Aggressive ethnoregionalism antagonizes the regional community, intensifies the feeling of uncertainty, causes on the side of “the newcomers”, threatened in their civil rights, counterreactions in the form of manifestations of the populist-nationalistic groups directed against regionalization projects, treated as the introduction of separating Upper Silesia from Poland (see Szczepański, 1993). It should be added that contrary to what the ideologists of regionalism acting in defense of the “Silesian identity” think — the notions of region, regionalism, autonomy are extremely weakly rooted in the common consciousness. In the sociological survey carried out in 1992 under the supervision of M. Szczepański among 320 inhabitants of Tychy, it has been observed, among others, that as many as 37.7% of the examined admit that they do not quite know what “regionalism” means, the majority of them (62.7%) associate this notion, first of all, with individual, deeply rooted memories, connected with birth, residence or living long in particular parts of the country, only every fourth of the examined inhabitants of Tychy points out that the level of identification with the region depends, first of all, on the deep knowledge of the culture of regions, their dialect, customs and traditions (Szczepański, 1993). The decisive minority (27.2%) of the examined from the above-mentioned Tychy research is for the full, economic and political

autonomy of Upper Silesia, the remaining either have no definite opinion on this matter (50.6%) or are against it (22.2%) (Szczepański, 1993). Summing up the author categorically claims that, at least in the case of Tychy, and maybe the whole region — “as political abuse one should consider attempts at legitimization or rationalization of activities aiming at regionalization with the help of reference to the support of public opinion” (Szczepański, 1993). There is no doubt that regional ideology has not, so far, got too many advocates either among the native population or — the more so as — among the newcomers, although undoubtedly in both these groups there is a potential of ethnocentrism and xenophobia which, through irresponsible activities of the politicians and deteriorating economic situation, may turn into the open conflict. Without forejudging the direction of evolution of the ethnic relationships in Upper Silesia (i.e. being of interest to us here the former Silesian Province) one should warn the local élites against the dangers coming from ideologizing the problem of cultural identity of the Silesians, connecting it with any political programme. Upper Silesia as the region of cultural-linguistic borderland is facing today the exceptional chance of overcoming the prejudices and stereotypes accumulated for decades and having negative influences on the mutual relationships between the native and the newcomers, it may, however, become the scene of confrontation of the most aggressive ethnoregionalism with shauvinism and Polish or German nationalism. Let's hope that the progressing processes of institutionalization of regional identity will not mean the growth of tensions and conflicts between the natives and the newcomers. Responsibility for further development of the events lies, first of all, on the main actors of the local political scene but also, to a large extent, on the academic community which should not stop in aiming at showing the complex truth on the socio-cultural face of Upper Silesia.

## Notes

- 1 Recently many interesting publications have appeared presenting the situation and identification problems of the minority groups living at present in Poland (Cala, 1992; Melchior, 1990; Kurcz, 1991; Sakson, 1991; Sadowski, 1992). These publications, still too few, have to fulfill, apart from cognitive functions, the educational role in breaking the ancient and fixed stereotypes and prejudices and in making the Polish majority aware of the duties resulting from the real cultural differentiation of our society.
- 2 Expression used by Lech Wałęsa at spring 1990, proclaiming the beginning of the division of new Solidarity élites.



- 3 The number of ethnic minorities in Poland after the Second World War is about 2% of whole population.
- 4 It should be important to mention that Poland after 1989 has introduced several law regulations favourable to ethnic minorities, like special electoral law, the possibility to teach minorities languages at school, special programmes for social and cultural activities of ethnic groups, etc.
- 5 To avoid misunderstandings connected with divergent opinions of historians, ethnographs, geographers on the actual range of Upper Silesia, I am explaining that the considerations presented here apply almost exclusively to this part of historical Upper Silesia (covering, first of all, the part of the Katowice Province separated on the East by former partition borders dividing Upper Silesia and Zagłębie Dąbrowskie) which in 1922 was in the borders of reborn Poland. I am stressing this fact not because some autonomous groups give it a symbolic meaning — there will be a more detailed discussion of it — but because it is in this part of Upper Silesia where the conditions favouring the creation of specific attitudes and xenophobic tendencies appeared which reappear in the current programmes of revitalizing of Silesian identity. For the details concerning the history of Poland see Davies, 1981, 1986.
- 6 *Volksliste* was the element of the Nazi national policy of germanization in the areas incorporated to III Reich after 1939 (Upper Silesia, Great Poland). The aim of this policy was to separate the German or those who could be recognized as German from other part of population.
- 7 The extreme part of Katowice Province which at the time of partition of Poland (1795—1918) belonged to the Russian Empire (Davis, 1986:354).
- 8 The above analysis is far from being complete since it does not take into account the organizations of the German minority acting on the regional political scene, there are, on the one hand, the Socio-Cultural Society of the Population of German Origin from the Katowice Province and, on the other, run by Dietmar Brehmer, German Working Community "Reconciliation and Future". Both these organizations — in opposition to the similar associations acting in the Opole region, keep far going moderation in the matters of regionalism and autonomy. Wider see Gerlich, 1992:33ff.

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Kazimiera Wódz

### Rewitalizacja śląskiej tożsamości — szanse i zagrożenia

#### Streszczenie

Artykuł składa się z trzech części. Część pierwszą i drugą poświęcono analizie zjawiska etnocentryzmu we współczesnym świecie, w tym także w Polsce. Autorka zastanawia się między innymi nad przyczynami rewindykacji etniczno-narodowościowych, których widownią stały się kraje byłego bloku wschodniego, rozważa podobieństwa i różnice między nacjonalizmem, etnoregionalizmem, separatyzmem, odwołuje się do wyników prowadzonych w Polsce w ostatnich latach badań socjologicznych, ukazujących wzrost nastrojów ksenofobicznych i niechęci wobec innych narodów. W trzeciej części artykułu autorka wyjaśnia źródła napięć etnicznych na Górnym Śląsku, zwracając szczególną uwagę na historyczne uwarunkowania separatyzmu górno-śląskiego.

Kazimiera Wódz

## **Neubelebung der schlesischen Identität — Chancen und Bedrohungen**

### **Zusammenfassung**

Der Artikel besteht aus drei Teilen. Der erste und zweite Teil wurde der Analyse des Phänomens des Ethnozentrismus in der gegenwärtigen Welt, darunter auch in Polen, gewidmet. Die Autorin erörtert unter anderem die Gründe der ethnisch-nationalen Neubelebung, die in den Ländern des ehemaligen Ostblocks auftauchten; sie analysiert die Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen dem Nationalismus, Enthnoregionalismus und Separatismus; sie beruft sich auch auf die Ergebnisse der in Polen in den letzten Jahren durchgeführten soziologischen Untersuchungen, die eine Steigerung der xenophobischen und ablehnenden Stimmungen anderen Völkern gegenüber aufweisen.

Im dritten Teil des Artikels erklärt die Autorin die Gründe der ethnischen Spannungen in Oberschlesien, indem sie besondere Aufmerksamkeit auf die historischen Grundlagen des schlesischen Separatismus lenkt.